Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COTONO 02001 211354Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 EB-07 IGA-02 AGRE-00 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 IO-13 COME-00 /043 W
---------- 080318 /47
R 211230Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9163
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 2001

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS AID, AFR/SFWA

ABIDJAN ALSO FOR REDSO, USDAO

NIAMEY ALSO FOR RDO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, EAGR, PINT, PINS, DM
SUBJ: BENIN FOOD SHORTAGE: UPDATE

REF: A. COTONOU 1785 (NOTAL), B. COTONOU 1681 (NOTAL).
C. COTONOU 1645 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FOOD SHORTAGE IN URBAN AREAS CAN BE EXPECTED TO WORSEN BECAUSE OF POOR CORN HARVEST EXPECTED IN JANUARY. GPRB LOSING CREDIBILITY ON ISSUE BECAUSE OF INFLEXIBLE PRICE POLICY AND MISPLACED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. POSSIBILITY THAT GPRB MAY ITSELF BE EXPORTING CORN TO NIGERIA AND GABON. END SUMMARY.

1. EARLIEST INDICATIONS ARE THAT POOR HARVEST DESCRIBED REFTELS TO BE REPEATED IN JANUARY "SECOND SEASON" CROP IN MOST
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 COTONO 02001 211354Z

CORN-PRODUCING AREAS OF SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL BENIN. AS WITH AUGUST-SEPTEMBER CROP, CRUCIAL ELEMENT IS RAINFALL. IN AFFECTED AREAS, WHICH EXTEND FROM OUIDAH IN SOUTHEAST, INCLUDING MOST OF ATLANTIQUE AND ZOU PROVINCES, RAIN CAME LATE AND WAS OF SHORT DURATION. OUEME AND MONO PROVINCES HAVE FARED BETTER, BUT HARVEST IS STILL DEPRESSED. NORTHERN BENIN, CLIMAT-

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

ICALLY DIFFERENT AND NOT A MAJOR CORN PRODUCING AREA, IS UNA-
FFECTED.

2. GPRB RESPONSE TO THE SHORTAGE CONTINUES ALONG LINES DESCRIBED
REFTELS: ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE
"UNSCRUPULOUS BUSINESSMEN." CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO HAVE WOUND DOWN
TO MERE PROPAGANDA EFFORT FOLLOWING PRESIDENT KEREKOU'S "CALL
TO ORDER" IN OCTOBER. (REFTEL B). FEW CONTROLS ARE IN
EVIDENCE AND GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE RELYING ON INFORMANTS TO
SUPPRESS BLACK MARKET TRANSACTIONS. LITTLE CORN OR OTHER GRAINS
ARE AVAILABLE IN OPEN CITY MARKETS, HOWEVER, AND NEW RULES IN
BLACK MARKET TOTALLY EXCLUDE MEN BECAUSE OF FEAR OF DISCLOSURE.
RETAIL PRICE IS ABOUT 150 FRANCS CFA PER KILO, OR ROUGHLY
THREE TIMES OFFICIAL PRICE. SHORTAGE OF CORN HAS ALSO DRIVEN
UP PRICES AND CAUSED SPORADIC SHORTAGES OF SUBSTITUTE FOOD-
STUFFS SUCH AS RICE AND MANIOC. ONLY REAL SHORTAGES AT PRESENT
ARE IN URBAN AREAS: COTONOU, PORTO NOVO, ABOMEY. RURAL INHAB-
ITANTS HAVE AMPLE RESERVES DUE TO RELUCTANCE TO SELL AT OFFICIAL
PRICE AND PERHAPS FEAR OF FUTURE SHORTAGE.

3. ON DEC 14, "POPULAR MEETING" WAS CALLED AT THE NEW COTONOU
SOCCER STADIUM. FULL ATTENDANCE WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH REVOLUTIONAL
COMMITTEE INFRASTRUCTURE. MAJOR SPEAKER WAS MINISTER OF COMMERCE
ATCHADE, WHO IS ALSO POLITICAL COMMISSIONER FOR ATLANTIQUE
PROVINCE. WHEN ATCHADE ANNOUNCED THAT DESPITE WEATHER PROBLEMS,
THE NATIONAL PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN HAD REALIZED LARGE INCREASE
IN CORN PRODUCTION AND BEGAN HARRANGUE OF "UNSCRUPULOUS
BUSINESSMEN," CROWD REACTED WITH BOOS AND JEERS. MASS EXODUS
ATTEMPT WAS BLOCKED WHEN SOLDIERS LOCKED EXIT GATES.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

4. FINAL IRONY IS THAT MOST UNSCRUPULOUS BUSINESSMAN MAY BE
GPRB ITSELF. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCE, GOVERNMENT MADE
ARRANGEMENTS AT BEGINNING OF NATIONAL PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN IN
EARLY 1976 FOR THE EXPORT OF CORN TO NIGERIA AND GABON IN ANT-
ICIPATION OF NORMAL SURPLUSES. DESPITE POOR WEATHER AND LOW
PRODUCTION LEVELS, GPRB DECIDED TO HONOR ITS EXPORT COMMIT-
MENTS. NOW THAT IT MAY BE LOSING CONTROL OF SITUATION, REPORTS
ARE THAT GPRB MAY ATTEMPT TO BUY BACK CORN FROM NIGERIA.

5. COMMENT: CORN SITUATION MAY BE TIME-BOMB FOR GPRB, SINCE
CREDIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT WITH BENINESE PEOPLE HAS BEEN DAMAGED.
THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT GOVERNMENT WILL RELENT ON ITS
PRICE POLICIES OR PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, OR THAT BLACK MARKET
AND SMUGGLING TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES CAN BE CONTROLLED.
ALTHOUGH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MAY ALLEVIATE SITUATION, GPRB NOT
LIKELY TO SEEK FOOD AID SINCE IT WOULD CONFLICT WITH THE
IDEOLOGICALLY-BASED PROCLAMATIONS ON THE SUCCESS OF THE
NATIONAL PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN. NONETHELESS, POSSIBILITY OF

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES IN URBAN AREAS BY MID-1977 SEEMS GREATER THAN EVER.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: LAGOS AND LIBREVILLE: REQUEST VERIFICATION AT POSTS' DISCRETION OF REPORTS CITED PARA FOUR. THOMPSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, CROP DESTRUCTION, REPORTS, FOOD ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976COTONO02001
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760468-0352
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761226/aaaaavtv.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 COTONOU 1785, 76 COTONOU 1681, 76 COTONOU 1645
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <05 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENIN FOOD SHORTAGE: UPDATE
TAGS: ECON, EAGR, PINT, PINS, DM
To: STATE LAGOS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006